



Covid 19 and the USA- China Relationship

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Abstract

The origins of the covid virus have not been empirically identified and different theories have since been proffered. One of these is the belief that the virus was a deliberate biological attack on China by the USA in order to scuttle China's economic domination of the Asian region and ultimately the whole international arena. This paper sought to analyse the validity of this theory. The paper evaluated both USA and China's national interests, and the means available towards their achievement under the auspices of the theory concerning the origins of the covid virus.

Keywords: national interests, covid virus

1. Introduction

In 2019 the world was shocked by the news of the outbreak of covid 19 in the Wuhan district of China. Subsequently this led to the deaths of thousands of people and the subsequent isolation of the whole province as a way to curb the spread of the virus to other provinces. However, this was not fruitful as the virus ended up spreading not only in China but throughout the world. The main question which still remains unanswered is on the identity of the exact origins of the pandemic. Different theories had been put forward, with some claiming that it came from wild animals sold in the Huanan Wholesale Seafood Market in Wuhan City. The US government is on record



claiming that it was scientifically produced in a Chinese laboratory. To date the Chinese government has remained diplomatically open to suggestions and research on the origins. A World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a fact-finding mission to the province of Wuhan and failed to come up with concrete evidence on the origins of the virus. Another school of thought points at the USA as the origins of the virus in a biological attack on China. This paper shall examine theory/assertion that the USA was the origin of covid 19. The state actors in this case are the United States of America, China and Iran and the non-state actor is the World Health Organization. The issues include survival, security and international domination in terms of trade, commerce, technology, culture and ideology. Conflict was identified as the most appropriate process for achieving the desired end state.

2. Literature Review

The vital national interests of the USA include to maintain the United States' singular leadership, military, and intelligence capabilities, and its international credibility. To that end some of its Extremely important USA vital interests are "Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, especially the Persian Gulf" and "Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies, particularly information systems." Within the category of Important US national interests are to: "Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries; Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization; Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations; Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements; and Maximize US GNP growth from international trade and investment". (The Commission on America's National Interests, 2000).



3. Research Methodology

The study applies qualitative methods relying on the analysis of written literature and activities of nations within the international arena. The main purpose of qualitative research is to understanding of social phenomena or phenomena by focusing more on a complete picture of the phenomenon being studied rather than breaking it down into interrelated variables. The hope is to get a deep understanding of the phenomenon to produce a theory.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Pillars of Foreign Policy

The enactment and implementation of foreign policy lies at the intersection between a nation's domestic (internal) and international (external) aspects. Therefore, the study of foreign policy marks the structures and processes of both the international system and the domestic political system. In the study of foreign policy as a system, stimuli from the external and domestic environments as inputs that affect a state's foreign policy are perceived by decision-makers. They transpire the process of converting inputs into outputs. The conversion process that occurs in the formulation stage of a state's foreign policy refers to the way they see the situation, both in the external and internal environment. By doing so, they consider the set objectives, corresponding to the means and capabilities in their possession while weighing the possible costs and risks. Thus, foreign policy can be classified into three components: the ends, the means and the ways. It is therefore pertinent at this point to analyse USA's foreign policy towards China.

4.2. USA National Interests

In coming up with *America's National Interests*, The Commission on America's National Interests (2000) identified six cardinal challenges one of which is to maintain



the United States' singular leadership, military, and intelligence capabilities, and its international credibility. To that end some of its Extremely important USA vital interests are "Prevent the emergence of a regional hegemon in important regions, especially the Persian Gulf" and "Maintain a lead in key military-related and other strategic technologies, particularly information systems." Within the category of Important US national interests are to: "Discourage massive human rights violations in foreign countries; Promote pluralism, freedom, and democracy in strategically important states as much as is feasible without destabilization; Maintain an edge in the international distribution of information to ensure that American values continue to positively influence the cultures of foreign nations; Promote international environmental policies consistent with long-term ecological requirements; and Maximize US GNP growth from international trade and investment". With all these in mind it can be argued that China's rise and domination and its policies are a direct threat to the USA interests as quoted above. Bottom line, the USA had to take action to safeguard its national interests.

4.3. Risk Assessment

Basing upon the Terry Deibel (2014) Matrix on foreign affairs strategy a nation considers several aspects before adopting a course of action. These include the assessment of own and adversary's capabilities as well as weighing the consequences of enemy retaliation. China is a nuclear power with the capacity for mutually assured destruction (MAD) in the case of direct warfare with the USA. Thus, it can be argued, having considered the probable reaction of the adversary and their consequences basing upon the military power and capability, the only option designed to attract less risk/costs to the national interests of USA open was the use of overt means in the form of biological attack (covid 19).



Drawing from history, the architects of the *America's National Interests* (2000:11) acknowledges that the USA had previously lost focus in its dealings with China by insisting that minimal steps toward increasing human rights for Chinese citizens be regarded as a precondition for renewal of China's Most Favored Nation status while arguing that the absence of immediate progress on human rights should not preclude China's membership in the World Trade Organization. However, recent developments arising from the continued growth of Chinese influence and power had the potential to create great risks to US interests globally, including even the risk of war. According to US policy when a direct threat to genuinely vital interests arise and is identified, actions to protect these vital interests will override other concerns that have previously preoccupied a government or the public. It can therefore be argued that upon noticing the fast rise in Chinese power and the inherent threat to vital interests, America felt the need to scuttle it through the biological attack.

4.4. Changes in International Environment

According to *America's National Interests* (2002:15) "Developments that pose little direct threat to interests in the short run can grow to become major threats to national interests in the long run. Consider, for example, US relations with China. If China becomes a major strategic adversary of the US over the longer run, this could undermine Americans' well-being as surely as a collapse of energy supplies from the Persian Gulf". At the time of crafting these interests China was still growing and not yet a "major strategic adversary of the US". However, by the year 2019 this status quo had drastically changed and China had grown to become the adversary that the US had predicted. (Department of Defense of the United States of America. 2018). As a result, it comes to reason that its threat classification and national interest classification rose to the level of vital interest requiring immediate and effective attention. But in order to prevent the outbreak of World War 3 or a nuclear war with China, the US had



to find a solution which could not be traced back to them thereby attracting retaliation and thus resorted to biological attack.

4.5. Threat of Growing Chinese Power

Around year 2000 the US held the conviction that the emergence of a new hegemon in Asia would threaten her advantageous position, however, at that period in time no country in East Asia, including China, appeared capable of seriously challenging US leadership unless America, through neglect or indifference, were to create a vacuum. China's rise to power, though indisputable, was considered to be happening at a manageable pace. China was boosting its deployment of short-range ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan and was remotely gaining a greater ability to challenge America and its allies in areas close to China's shores (The Commission on America's National Interests: 2000)). By the year 2019 the landscape has changed drastically and China had risen massively to become a direct threat to US interests not only in the Asian region but globally.

4.6. Technology

The US views it as being Extremely Important to maintain a technological lead in key military-related information technologies and Important to maintain its strong position in international distribution of information so that American values continue to influence positively the cultures of other nations. America's dominance in information technology, broadly defined, substantially influences the development of cultures throughout the world, including our own. CNN, the millions of US Web pages on the Internet, Hollywood movies and TV programs, and systems designed by Microsoft, Intel, Sun, Cisco, Oracle, eBay, or any number of dot-coms are American information carriers that affect other nations in a manner more supportive of American values than those of nations that would restrict, tailor, and censor information flows to and among their citizens. (The Commission on America's



National Interests: 2000:50). However, over the years the US has rapidly lost this dominant position to Chinese technological advancement.

4.7. The Character of a Leader

Foreign policy is a strategy or plan of action formulated by state decision-makers in dealing with other countries or other international political units, which is controlled to achieve specific national goals as outlined in the terminology of national interests. Foreign policy carried out by the government of a particular state is aimed at achieving the national interest of the people it governs although the national interest of a state at large is determined by who stays in power. The character of the leader has a great bearing on the direction of the nation's foreign policy. The corona virus bomb carried a flag with a caricature of Trump and the ironic message "To China and Iran with my love" portraying the showbiz, comedian background character of Trump. He is thus portrayed as someone who has the clownish character of make funny of a world catastrophe such as the covid pandemic which has devastated all aspects of life on earth. To this end he has been labelled the 'twitter president of the world'. Moreover, his incitement of the American populace into the Capitol Violence supports the notion that he has the capacity to go beyond the normal in order to achieve his goals.

4.8. Application of Rational in Foreign Policy

The basic assumption of Lovell's Strategic/Rational Model is that states are considered as actors who seek to maximize the achievement of their goals based on rational calculations in the global political sphere. Lovel has suggested several main factors which influence the process of a nation-state's foreign policy strategy formulation, namely the structure of the international system, perceptions of elites, the strategies of other nation-states, and national capabilities of each state. It can be argued that this



analysis was the basis for the USA resorting to covert biological attack on China instead of direct military confrontation. China is also a super nuclear power with the capacity to strike back at the USA from the view point of mutually assured destruction (MAD) basing upon this consideration, the USA had no choice but to adopt clandestine means towards safeguarding its national interests against the threat of Chinese continued economic growth.

4.9. Significance of Maintenance of Power

Power, according to Schwarzenberger (1951), is one of the major factors in International Relations. He states that community groups (countries) in an international system would do, in terms of searching for greater power, what they physically control more than they should morally do. In other words, power is the ability to obtain what is desired/to achieve foreign policy output through control over a changing external environment. Basing upon this view, the US identified the rise of China as a severe threat to its power and hence had to take 'the necessary steps' to rectify the situation and maintain in dominant status in international environment in a unipolar system.

The study of foreign policy focuses on the external behavior of states in the international system through their authorised representatives or governments to achieve their national interests. The activities of a nation's representative reflect the official position of the nation with regards to any issue. The then USA president, Donald trump is on record for deliberately referring to the virus as 'the Chinese virus' or "Wuhan virus" on several occasions in direct disregard of international best practice diplomacy and World Health Organization protocols. This can be construed as a deliberate effort by a guilty party to try and convince the international community of his innocence through continuous reference to the country of the outbreak. In the same vein, he appeared publicly on several occasions without putting on a face mask in disregard of WHO protocols. He projected a picture of the invincibility of America



against an international pandemic, an action which can only be taken by someone who has an ace up his sleeve. Someone who knew something that the was hidden to the whole world. According to Wedel (2020) for this irresponsible behavior by a state representative can have Consequences which include economic distress, as tourists withdraw, investment cools down and solidarity between people weakens. Linking a specific disease with a specific place can lead to discrimination, stigmatization and avoidance of a country, town or village.

4.10. China's Vision

China's National Strategy aims to achieve "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" by 2049. China's strategy can be characterized as a determined pursuit of political and social modernity that includes far-ranging efforts to expand China's national power, perfect its governance systems, and revise the international order. This entails an effort to realize long-held nationalist aspirations to "return" China to a position of strength, prosperity, and leadership on the world stage. In 2019, China intensified its efforts to advance its overall development including steadying its economic growth, strengthening its armed forces, and taking a more active role in global affairs. (China Department of Defense, Military and Security: 2020)

4.11. Aim of AUKUS Deal

The US is prepared to do anything short of open confrontation in its efforts towards curtailing the growing power and dominance of China. An example is the AUKUS deal entered into on 16 September 2021, under which America and Britain will help Australia deploy a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines in the pacific region. According to Erickson (2021) the nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) club has been limited to just six nations: US, UK, France, China, Russia and India. Deliberately assisting Australia to become a seventh member is an indicator of the US's panic and



restlessness over China's continued development. It offers Australia a critical technological edge in any future tension or conflict with China which is currently working hard to upgrade its membership with Russian aid. Although the leaders of these three countries did not say so, the AUKUS deal is seen as a step towards curtailing China, which has made significant aggressive manoeuvres in the Pacific region, especially in and around the South China sea. (Kaushik 2021). According to Aljazeera (2021) it was impossible to read this as anything other than a response to China's rise, and a significant escalation of American commitment to that challenge, as the United States has only ever shared this technology with the United Kingdom, so the fact that Australia is now joining this club indicates that the United States is prepared to take significant new steps and break with old norms to meet the China challenge. This was significant evidence that the US was prepared to enter a cold war with China.

4.12. Scientific Research

In refutation of the theory that COVID-19 was a deliberate attack on China by the USA or that it originated from a laboratory the World Health Organisation (WHO) fact finding team to Wuhan noted that concluded that it is not possible to determine precisely how humans in China were initially infected with SARS-CoV-2. However, all available evidence suggested that SARS-CoV-2 has a natural animal origin and is not a manipulated or constructed virus. It premised that SARS-CoV-2 virus most probably has its ecological reservoir in bats. Recent scientific papers are also tilting the debate towards a zoonotic origin. Researchers in China and the University of Glasgow published a paper in the journal *Science* that found "animal-to-human transmission associated with infected live animals is the most likely cause of the COVID-19 pandemic". Additionally, a paper by 21 top virologists in the journal *Cell* bluntly concluded: "There is currently no evidence that SARS-CoV-2 has a laboratory origin."



However, it is important to note that the zoological origin of covid virus is still a hypothesis which has not yet been empirically proven regardless of the amount of research conducted to date by the best scientists using the latest technology available. This situation raises suspicions that the true nature/origins of the virus is a highly classified secret being protected at all lengths. China has since denied the WHO research team permission to conduct a second visit to Wuhan. This can be interpreted as China's diplomatic declaration that the research team lacked credible sincerity. The WHO was deliberately on a mission to protect US interests by hiding the truth. Maria Cheng of the Tambay Times quoted Fu Cong, a director-general in China's Foreign Ministry who indicated that officials should "concentrate on other possible avenues that may help trace the origin" of COVID-19 and suggested studies should be pursued in other countries. He accused the U.S. of "hyping the lab leak theory" and trying to shift the blame onto China, and implied the coronavirus might be linked to high-level American research labs, suggesting the United States invite WHO to investigate some of its installations

5. Conclusion

The origins of the covid virus have not yet been confirmed even though numerous researched has been conducted and this raises room for suspicion of foul play. The cartoon depicting the virus as a biological attack on China by the USA is one of the projected speculations regarding the origins of covid 19. This paper has highlighted grounds upon which this premise can be reached through close analysis of US national interests and courses open for their achievement under the prevailing circumstances were Chinese retaliation can be fatal to the survival of the US. However, factually the origins of covid 19 have not been scientifically ascertained.



Refereces

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